

20 foods to try when you visit Scotland

Scotland boasts world-class produce, from top quality seafood to indigenous wild game and fresh berries, but our culinary credentials are not widely known.

In fact, Scottish food has long come under criticism for being fatty, beige and lacking in nutrition, with naughty-but-nice staples such as haggis, tablet and deep-fried Mars Bars giving us a bad reputation.

But like them or loathe them, Scotland's foodie traditions continue to tempt – and boggle the minds of – curious visitors.

So, when you're visiting Scotland, make sure to pack a pair of trousers with an elasticated waistband and prepare to eat yourself around the country with our pick of the best Scottish foods to try.

Porridge



You'll never be stuck for a hearty breakfast in Scotland, with porridge oats being one of our best-loved ingredients.

Highly nutritious and a healthy way to start your day, porridge will give you the energy to climb Arthur's Seat again and again.

It's the simplest Scottish dish to prepare, made using oats with water or milk. You can top it with whatever you like – often people use sugar, honey or fruit – but for a traditional Scottish treat, try mixing in some double cream or a splash of whisky!

Full Scottish fry-up

If you need to fuel-up ahead of a packed day of travelling, or you're recovering from a heavy night in the pub, then a full Scottish fry-up is just what the doctor ordered.

While fry-ups can vary from place to place, these are the usual suspects you'll find on your plate in Scotland: fried eggs, fried mushrooms, sausages (either link or square), baked beans, haggis, tattie scones, black pudding, grilled tomato and some toast.

It's a breakfast speciality that you'll be able to find no matter where you are in Scotland.



Breakfast roll



If you need breakfast on the go, but still want a little taste of a fry-up, then a breakfast roll is exactly what you need.

A soft, buttery, floury breakfast roll sets the perfect foundation. The filling, however, is entirely up to you.

With items such as bacon, sausage, fried egg, tattie scones and more on offer, you'll be coming back time and time again to try a different combination of fillings.

Why not try a bacon roll with lashings of nippy broon (brown sauce)?

Tattie scone

The tattie scone – or potato scone for anyone who's not fluent in Scots – is a beloved part of any full Scottish fry-up or carb-on-carb morning roll.

Combining just a few ingredients – mashed potatoes, butter and flour – the humble tattie scone is as simple as it is versatile.

It's best served grilled or fried with a knob of melted butter or dipped into something dribbly like a poached egg or baked beans.

You can even have a go at making your own for a fluffier, softer tattie scone than the shop-bought versions.



Scottish salmon



Scottish seafood is amongst the best in the world and our salmon is no exception.

It swims from the North Atlantic into our rivers and is known for its moist, smooth texture and rosy colour.

Many of Scotland's restaurants offer Scottish salmon, and it's at its best served simply with pan-fried green vegetables.

Black pudding

With its main ingredient blood, black pudding can be an intimidating food for visitors to try.

However, being loaded with protein, potassium, calcium and iron, black pudding has been classed as a "superfood".

This melt-in-your-mouth speciality – not unlike Spanish morcilla – is sure to be a hit with blood-thirsty visitors to Scotland. Don't knock it until you've tried it!



Grouse



Native to Scotland, grouse is considered the king of feathered game and has a distinctive gamey flavour.

Grouse shooting season falls between August and December meaning you can get a grouse straight from the Scottish moors on your plate. And if you've got a strong stomach, why not try shooting one yourself?

Each bird is usually enough to serve one person and can be prepared in a variety of ways. Try it stewed, in a casserole or roasted.

Most high quality restaurants in Scotland serve grouse dishes in the autumn when it's in season.

Scotch pie

The Scotch pie is a small but mighty delicacy.

A double crust pie case sets the perfect stage for a rich filling of traditionally minced mutton, although other meat is used as well.

Served hot or cold, it's perfectly hand-sized for sustenance on the go.

Scotch pies are widely available at bakeries throughout Scotland so make sure you pick one up on your travels.



Cullen skink

A creamy and delicious Scottish soup, cullen skink combines smoked salmon, onions and potatoes.

Often served as a restaurant starter, it's the perfect dish to warm you from the inside should our somewhat unpredictable weather decide to take a turn for the worse.

It absolutely should be mopped up with bread so you can get every last drop.

Stovies

In Scots, to "stove" something is to stew it.

Therefore, it makes sense that stovies are potatoes that have been stewed with onions and meat.

Traditional comfort food, stovies are the ultimate dish if you're in need of a pick-me-up.



Chicken tikka masala



We know what you're thinking, but hear us out!

While most people consider chicken tikka masala to be an Indian dish, there are rumours it actually originated from an Indian restaurant in Glasgow.

Regardless of its origins, this spicy, creamy curry has been truly embraced by Scotland and is one of our nation's favourites.

Fish supper

Fish suppers are a staple of the Scottish diet. Commonly they consist of deep-fried haddock with chips, purchased from a 'chippy' (chip shop).

Depending on where in Scotland you decide to sample a fish supper, you may find yourself caught between the great debate of "salt and sauce" vs "salt and vinegar".

Salt and sauce refers to having your fish and chips doused in salt and 'chippy sauce', a brown, vinegary sauce – not unlike the aforementioned 'nippy broon'. If you're visiting Edinburgh, salt and sauce is the way to go.



In the west coast, however, salt and vinegar is the more acceptable way to season your fish supper. Now that you're clued up on fish supper etiquette, all that's left is to get tucked in...

Tablet



For those with a sweet tooth, tablet is the real deal.

A not-too-distant relative of fudge, Scottish tablet is made from sugar, condensed milk and butter – and lots of it. Tough on the outside with a melt-in-your-mouth middle, this sweet treat is guaranteed to cause a spike in your blood sugar and has an addictive quality that will make you never want to stop eating the stuff.

Whilst this piece of confectionery dates back to the 18th century, we still love eating it to this day and probably always will.

Soor plooms

Scottish for “sour plums”, soor plooms are guaranteed to have you scrunching your face, smacking your lips together and reaching for another.

Small, green, hard boiled confectionery, soor plooms are a childhood favourite among Scots.

Generally served in a small paper bag, soor plooms are perfect for those who love a sour sweet.



Shortbread

Made from flour, sugar and butter, shortbread is a rich, crumbly, buttery biscuit that pairs perfectly with a hot cup of tea.

Originally an expensive biscuit and reserved only for special occasions such as Christmas and Hogmanay (New Year's Eve), shortbread has made its way into the mainstream and for that we're thankful – we couldn't imagine only being able to eat it once a year!

Cranachan

Described as the king of Scottish desserts, cranachan combines the richness of cream, the tart sweetness of raspberries and the earthy umami flavour of oats to create the perfect dessert.

It's also found with many different types of flavour. With whisky, chocolate and orange varieties available, you could have cranachan again and again and not have the same experience twice.



Edinburgh Rock

Distinctly different from traditional rock – a hard boiled sugary sweet generally flavoured with peppermint – Edinburgh rock is unique.

Made with sugar, water and various flavourings, Edinburgh Rock is soft and crumbly in texture.

Our capital's sweet is coloured with delightful pastel hues and chances are you've never had anything quite like it. Make sure you



Tunnock's Tea Cake

Perfect with a tea or coffee, the Tunnock's Tea Cake is the perfect post-lunch snack to get you through to tea time (what we call dinner time in Scotland).

It's made up of a small, round shortbread biscuit base covered with a dome of meringue – similar to the texture of marshmallow – and sealed in a thin shell of chocolate.

The iconic red and silver tinfoil packaging is enough to put hearts in the eyes of any Scot.



Scottish cheese board



Thanks to our unique climate and geography, Scotland is particularly well suited to cheese making – something we've embraced to the maximum.

From traditional cheddar to soft, creamy varieties and blue cheeses, we've got something to suit all tastes. Why not try some of the best-known varieties such as Anster, Ayrshire Dunlop or Orkney Smoked Cheddar? Or just have a wander around some of Scotland's artisan cheese shops (there are plenty in Glasgow and Edinburgh) and sample some local produce.

Most good restaurants offer Scottish cheese boards served with oatcakes and chutney – perfection on a plate.

Haggis

It wouldn't be a list of must-try Scottish foods without Scotland's national dish.

While myth and speculation has led many of us – Scots included – to think that the haggis is an actual living, breathing animal, the sad truth is there's no such thing as a friendly little haggis.

The ugly beast is actually a combination of minced sheep heart, liver and lung meat bulked out with oatmeal, onions, suet, seasoning and spices. Haggis might not sound particularly appetising, but one taste of this Scottish comfort food dish and you'll be hooked.



It's best served with neeps and tatties (swede and potatoes), and a splash of creamy whisky sauce for an authentic Scottish dinner.

Click on the box and do the crossword puzzle.